

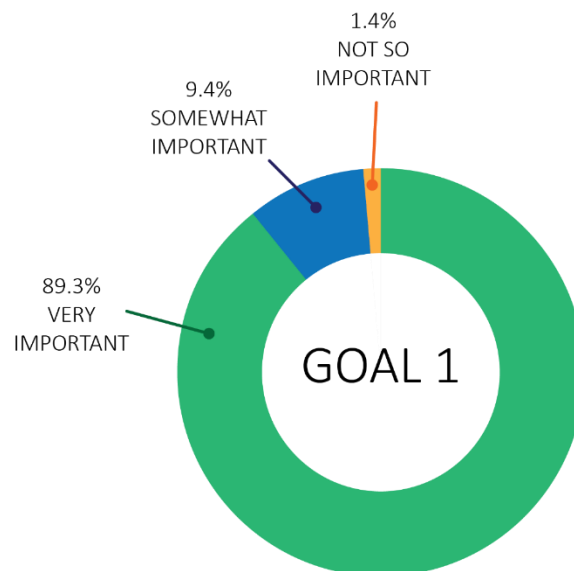
Wellesley Open Space and Recreation Plan Community Survey

The Wellesley Natural Resources Commission (NRC) distributed a community survey to begin its update process of the Town's 2015 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP). The purpose of the survey was to solicit community input to inform action steps and confirm, adapt, and prioritize the efforts of various boards, departments, and stakeholders when implementing the plan's objectives. The survey was available from July to October 2021. It was promoted by the Town through its website and social media outlets, and survey invitations were mailed directly to all residents within the Environmental Justice (EJ) neighborhoods in Wellesley. The NRC members also took an active role in promoting the survey through their networks with community groups and organizations. A total of 663 participated.

Goal 1: Restore, preserve, and enhance open space

Restore, preserve, and enhance open space for water, air and habitat protection, biodiversity, climate mitigation, enhancement of community character, and enjoyment of the public.

Question 1: Do you think this goal is Very Important, Somewhat Important, Not So Important? (652 responded)



Question 2: Below are the current objectives for this goal. Please pick your top three priorities. (662 responded)



Question 3: Do you think there needs to be any changes to this goal and/or its objectives? (174 responded)

open space Wellesley protection emphasis water protect residents
 changes help environment public trees builders
 climate change enjoyment public open space
 enhance natural resources space willing Maintain preservation
 climate parks enhancement community character flooding
 preserving



Of the 174 respondents, 61 indicated that no changes are necessary to the goal and/or its objectives.

Of those that provided comments, a common topic was Wellesley's role in the broader discussion of climate change. Many respondents were positive about the need to mitigate climate change, touching upon transportation, the role of individual homeowners and residents, and the need for continued climate education. However, several respondents questioned the inclusion of climate change mitigation as an objective, citing concerns over costs and the perception that Wellesley bears little responsibility for global climate change and/or its actions will not affect broader climate trends in a meaningful way.

Responses also expressed potentially competing demand for more active recreation facilities (sports fields, pools, etc.) and more protection of land for passive recreation and wildlife habitat, with comments advocating to prioritize one over the other. Concerns about development, including overdevelopment, were often grounded in recommendations to better enforce existing regulations and by-laws.

Other responses focused on:

- Protection of drinking water resources (through land preservation, stormwater management, and impervious surface management).
- Concern about affordable housing, including the availability of land for affordable housing development.
- A need for invasive species management.
- Competing opinions on the need for noise and light abatement mechanisms.

Question 4: What actions should the Town consider under this goal? (181 responded)

Many respondents discussed development regulations and/or better enforcement of existing regulations. Comments focused on:

- Protecting trees, limiting tree removal during development, and ensuring proactive vegetation management.
- Encouraging densification in appropriate areas.
- Limiting development and/or the effect of development near wetlands, surface water features, and wildlife habitat areas.
- Protecting existing protected lands by enforcing leash laws and minimizing harmful human practices.

Some respondents discussed education and programming to increase community involvement and understanding of environmental topics. Respondents proposed engaging community members through accessible educational programming and awareness initiatives to increase buy-in and participation. Respondents also proposed offering environmental education opportunities to K-12 students.

Some respondents discussed land preservation. Comments mentioned proactive planning that focuses on identifying parcels with high biodiversity values or those that would increase contiguous areas of protected land. Respondents also focused on mechanisms for land preservation, including encouraging incentives for land preservation at the local level, obtaining conservation easements, and partnering with local land trusts.

Goal 2: Protect, enhance, and restore Wellesley's sensitive land, water, and wetland resources

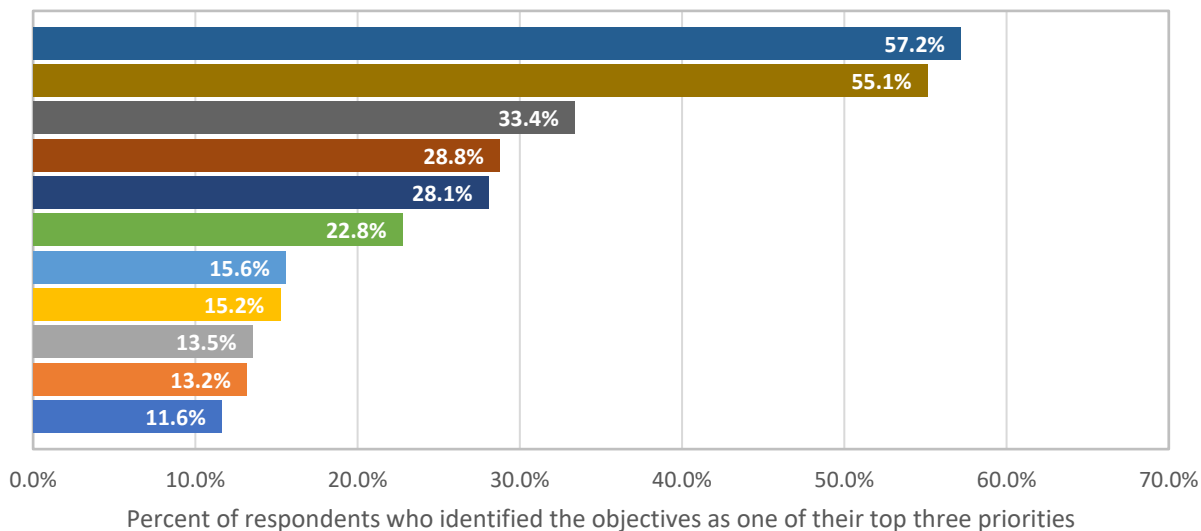
Protect, enhance, and restore Wellesley's sensitive land, water, and wetland resources, especially those resources that have been degraded or impaired.

Question 5: Do you think this goal is Very Important, Somewhat Important, Not So Important? (567 responded)



Question 6: Below are the current objectives for this goal. Please pick your top three priorities. (584 responded)

Goal 2 Objectives Prioritization



- Minimize the impact of fertilizers, pesticides, and other chemical lawn and landscape treatments on the Town's groundwater and surface water bodies.
- Protect Morses Pond, Lake Waban, and Longfellow Pond as primary water supply areas and as passive recreational resources.
- Enforce laws, bylaws, and regulations to protect groundwater, wetlands, and surface water bodies.
- Protect open space and wetlands from encroachment, illegal use, and dumping.
- Minimize the impact of wastewater disposal on the Town's groundwater and surface water bodies.
- Carefully manage floodplain development to protect and maintain water quality and to prevent flooding.
- Continue to restore and manage ponds to avoid eutrophication.
- Engage in regional efforts to protect water resources.
- Minimize the impact of salt on the Town's groundwater and surface water bodies.
- Continue to promote awareness of the environmental damage caused by storm water runoff and increased impervious surfaces and regulate development to minimize pollution impacts.
- Enact new bylaws and regulations where necessary.

Question 7: Do you think there needs to be any changes to this goal and/or its objectives? (117 responded)

laws wetlands resources pesticides bylaws enact protect existing
enforced Maintain use place water good



Of the 117 respondents, 62 indicated that no changes are necessary to the goal and/or its objectives.

Of those that did provide comments, most were mixed in focus. Several focused on the idea of enforcement and regulation, with most emphasizing the need to enforce existing bylaws rather than enacting new bylaws. Respondents were favorable toward the idea of drinking water protection and expressed concern about the current state of their drinking water. Aside from protecting resources, respondents also noted the need to identify and restore impaired resources.

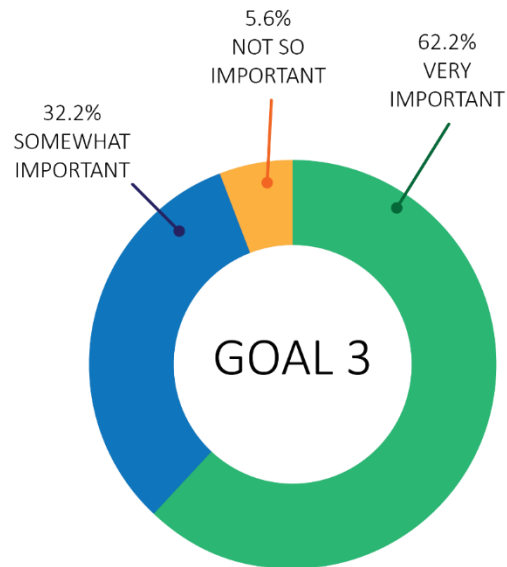
Question 8: What actions should the Town consider under this goal? (114 responded)

Common themes for proposed actions were:

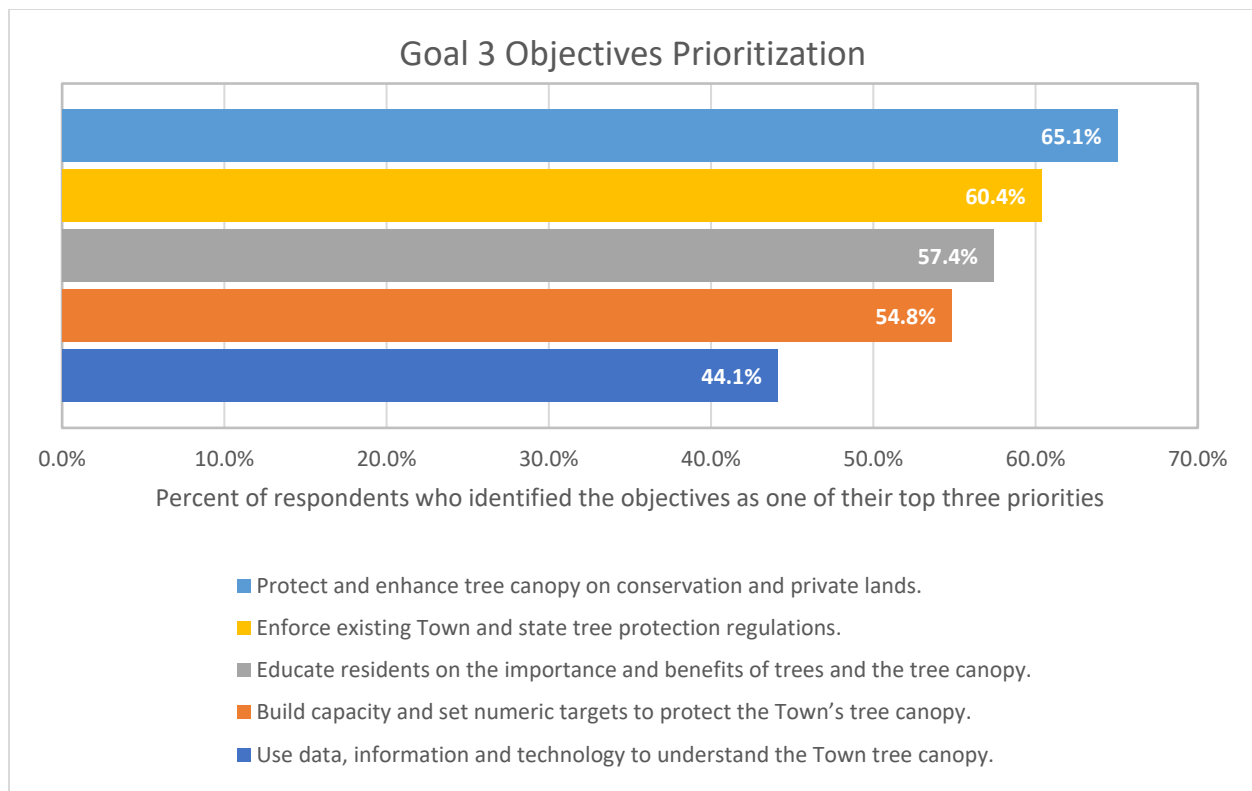
- Education or awareness initiatives to engage residents and encourage environmentally friendly behaviors.
- Enforcement or regulations in their comments. Most comments were focused broadly on strengthening enforcement of existing regulations.
- Focusing on Lake Waban, Morses Pond, and Longfellow Pond and/or drinking water resources. Comments about Lake Waban focused on recreational access. Morses Pond and Longfellow Pond comments tended to focus on protecting the ponds as primary water supply areas.
- Encouraging more environment-friendly lawn care practices with most favorable toward the idea of limiting harmful lawn care applications.

Goal 3: Expand and protect the tree canopy

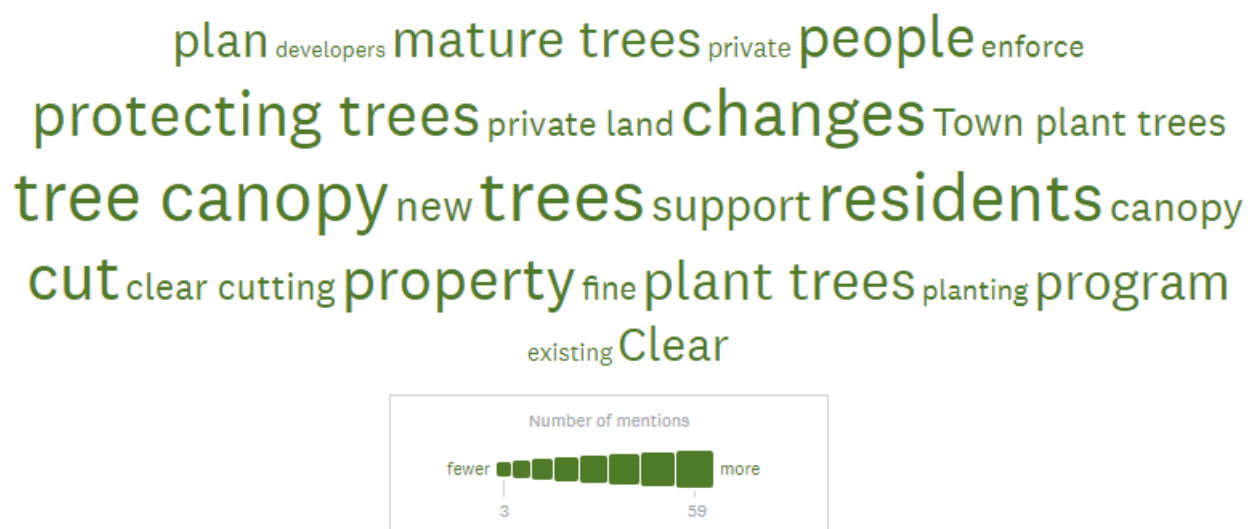
Question 9: Do you think this goal is Very Important, Somewhat Important, Not So Important? (568 responded)



Question 10: Below are the current objectives for this goal. Please pick your top three priorities. (578 responded)



Question 11: Do you think there needs to be any changes to this goal and/or its objectives? (117 responded)



Of the 117 respondents, 45 respondents indicated that no changes are necessary to the goal and/or its objectives.

Comments were generally positive about enforcing existing tree protection regulations (and related penalties). Some were mixed about strengthening the existing regulations versus just enforcing the existing regulations. Several comments also touched upon the need to be sensitive to the rights of private landowners. Others suggested offering tree plantings and/or tree planting assistance to residents. Comments related to educating residents on the importance and benefits of trees and the tree canopy were generally positive.

Question 12: What actions should the Town consider under this goal? (103 responded)

Common themes for proposed actions were:

- Stronger enforcement of existing tree regulations to prevent existing trees from being removed. Comments also focused on pairing enforcement with stricter penalties for illegal tree removals.
- Raising awareness of tree canopy benefits and educating residents to encourage more tree plantings (especially on private property).
- Tree planting days and tree giveaways for residents.
- More actions to protect the tree canopy by mapping, quantifying benefits, and establishing metrics and removing invasive species and planting native species.

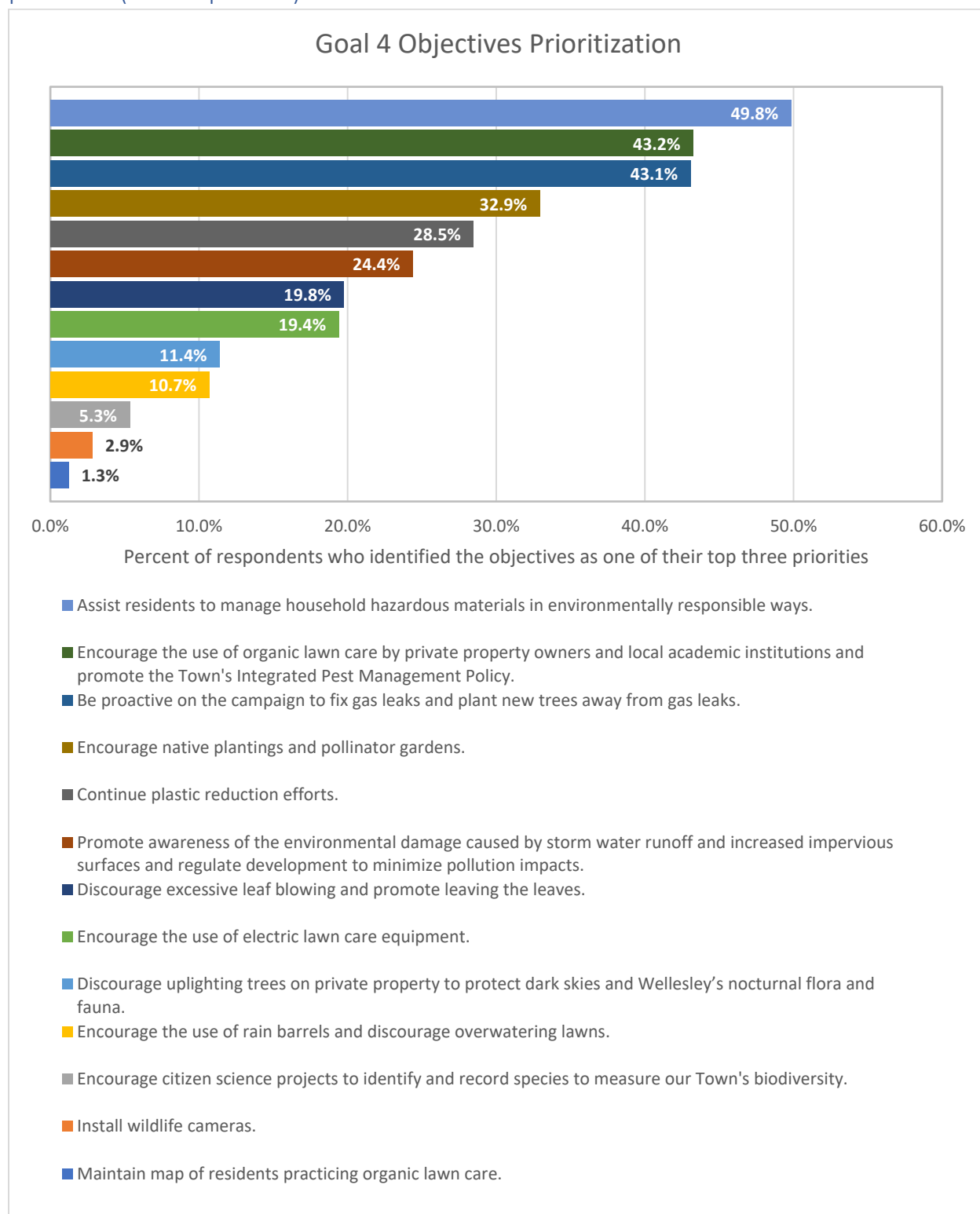
Goal 4: Prevent damage to natural resources and human health

Prevent damage to natural resources and human health from hazardous materials and environmentally harmful practices.

Question 13: Do you think this goal is Very Important, Somewhat Important, Not So Important? (547 responded)



Question 14: Below are the current objectives for this goal. Please pick your top three priorities. (562 responded)



Question 15: Do you think there needs to be any changes to this goal and/or its objectives? (116 responded)

Encourage times practices gas problem lighting leaf blowers
 maintain focus large people impacts issue equipment
 use plan residents current difficult property Ban lawn
 lawn care make electric



Of the 116 respondents, 45 indicated that no changes are necessary to the goal and/or its objectives.

Comments on changes were mixed in support for the goal and/or its objectives. Some expressed concerns that Goal 4 was too broad, a catch-all, and/or too focused on changing residents' behaviors. Respondents tended to favor lawn care restrictions, especially related to leaf blowers, and uplighting restrictions, but there were several comments that disagreed with restrictions to activities on private property. Increasing options for waste disposal and addressing gas leaks were discussed positively.

Question 16: What actions should the Town consider under this goal? (108 responded)

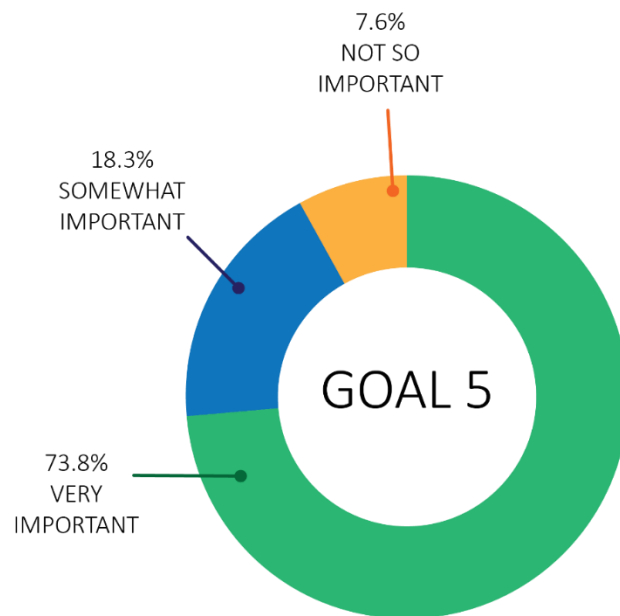
Common themes for proposed actions were:

- Mechanisms to encourage environmentally friendly behaviors. Education and incentives were frequently mentioned. Respondents also mentioned increasing the number of hazardous waste disposal days to facilitate safe disposal.
- Focus on more environment-friendly lawn care practices. Comments proposed limiting and/or banning the use of loud, gas-powered lawn equipment (especially leaf blowers). Other comments focused on discouraging environmental harmful chemicals and encouraging native plantings.
- Increasing the number of hazardous waste disposal days to facilitate safe disposal, as well as educating residents about the environmental impacts of hazardous materials.
- Stronger enforcement and consequences for residents who violate Town regulations and by-laws.

Goal 5: Take action to address the accelerating climate change crisis

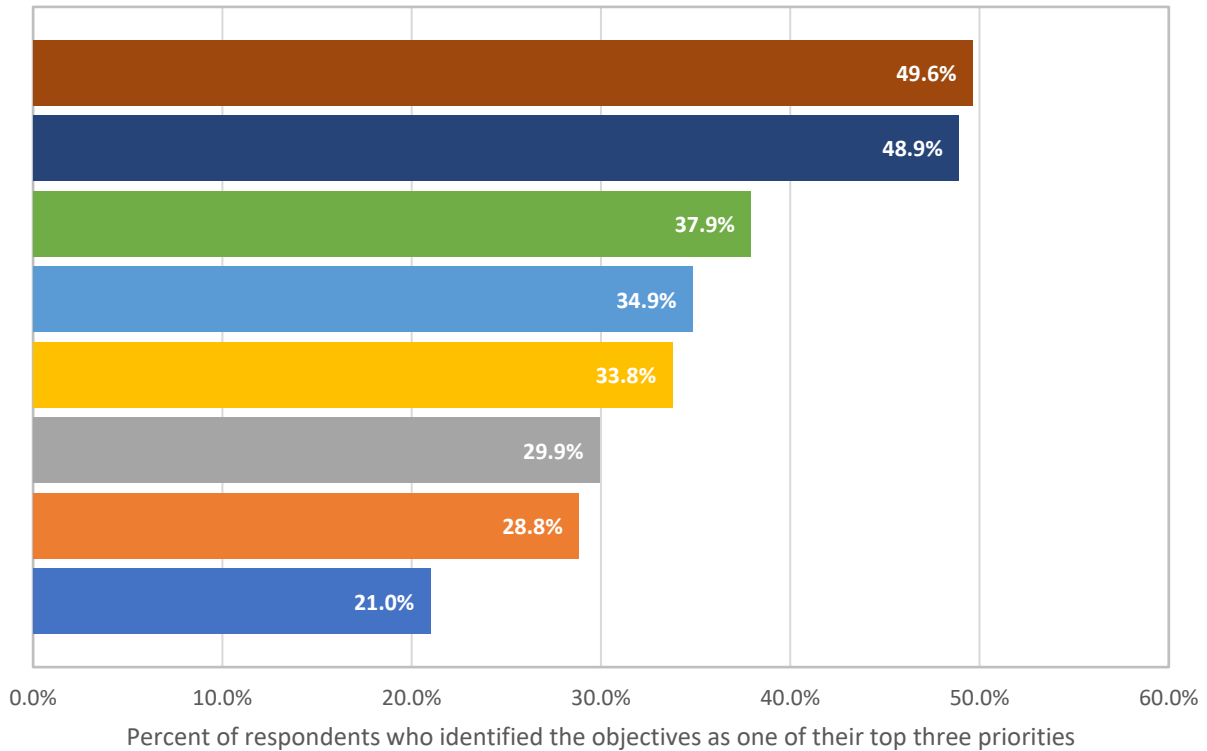
Take action to address the accelerating climate change crisis by encouraging sustainable policy and practice within the Town government and throughout the community.

Question 17: Do you think this goal is Very Important, Somewhat Important, Not So Important? (536 responded)



Question 18: Below are the current objectives for this goal. Please pick your top three priorities. (548 responded)

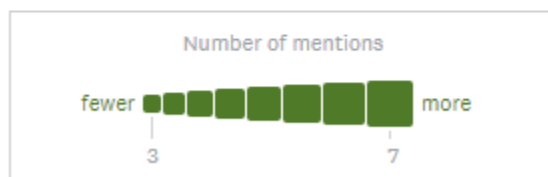
Goal 5 Objectives Prioritization



- Ensure that all new projects employ green infrastructure systems.
- Continue and expand existing Town efforts to reduce the waste stream and expand materials reuse and recycling (including food and yard waste composting) through Wellesley's 3R Working Group.
- Encourage the planting of native species to enhance biodiversity.
- Explore and implement efforts to conserve water resources.
- Encourage Town efforts to electrify vehicle and landscaping equipment and create "Green Zones."
- Utilize the Sustainable Building Guidelines when constructing facilities on parkland.
- Participate in the Town's Climate Action Planning process.
- Work across town departments to implement Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) recommendations.

Question 19: Do you think there needs to be any changes to this goal and/or its objectives (87 responded)

school Focus Encourage climate building climate change changes



Of the 87 respondents, 45 indicated that no changes are necessary to the goal and/or its objectives.

Comments were mixed in content. Mechanisms to change behavior (incentives, regulation, ease of access to services) was mentioned by several respondents, but other respondents expressed concern that the Town's objectives may result in costs to residents. A few respondents reacted negatively to Goal 5's focus on climate change.

Question 20: What actions should the Town consider under this goal? (67 responded)

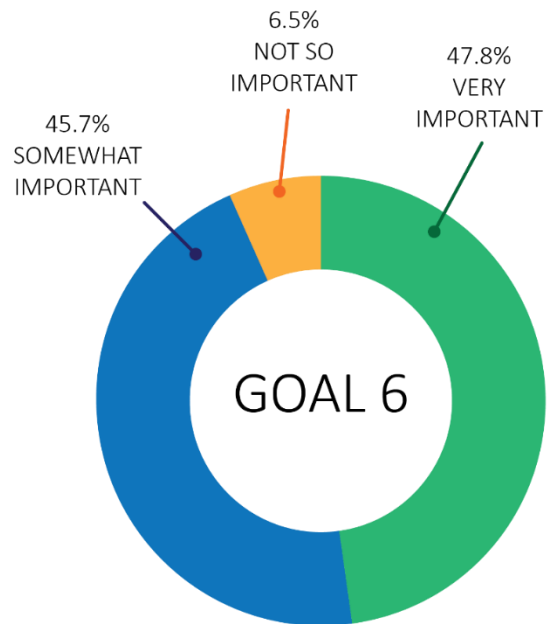
Common themes for proposed actions were:

- Encouraging environmentally responsible behaviors through incentives, education, and/or assistance. Composting, recycling, and trash was mentioned by multiple respondents.
- Instituting new regulations or focusing on enforcement of existing regulations, although three respondents questioned the need for more regulations and/or enforcement.
- Implementing sustainable practices within the Town's departments or on Town-owned land, in part to lead by example.
- More electric vehicle infrastructure/adoption and addressing idling issues with school parent-student drop-offs.

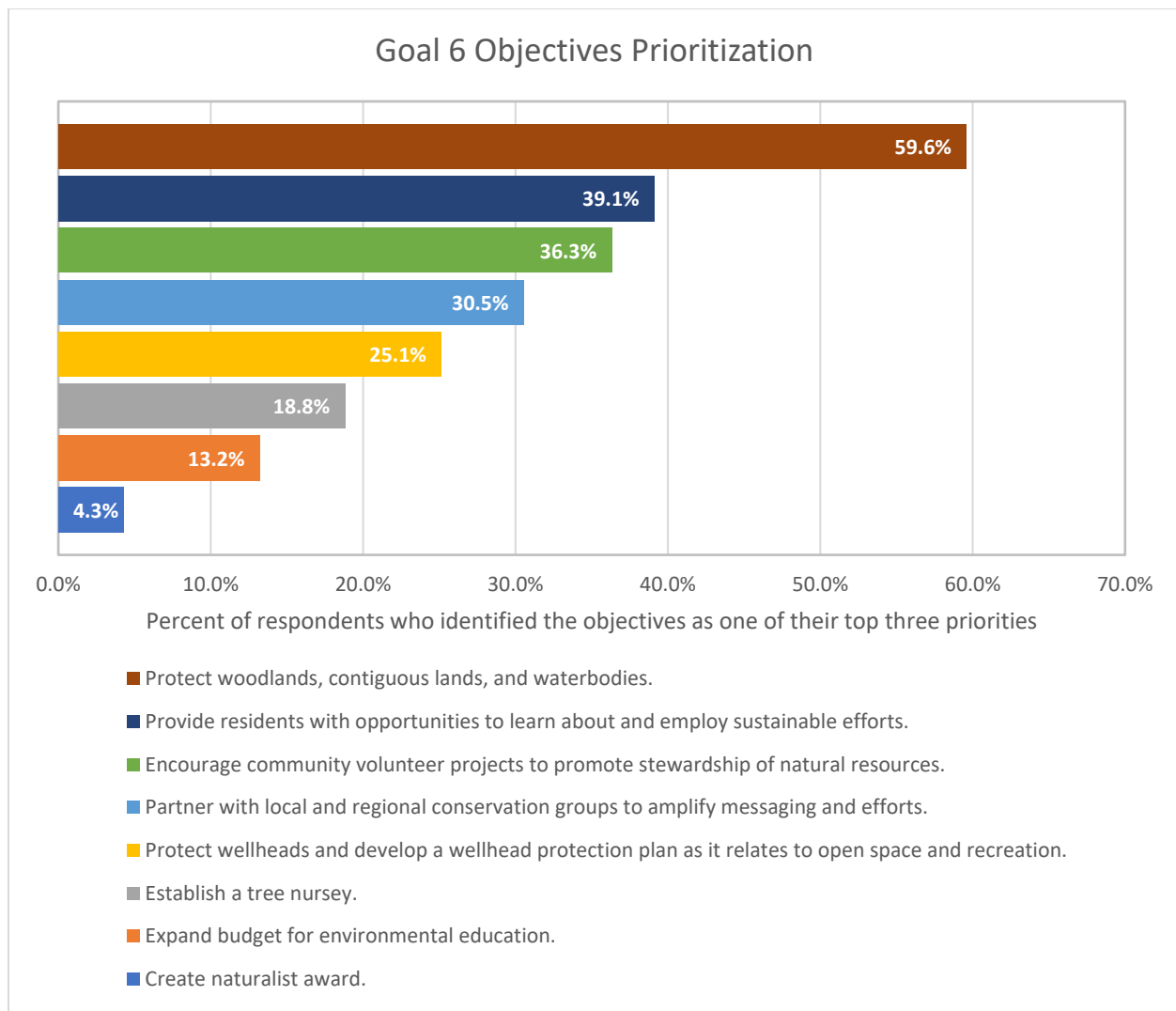
Goal 6: Promote stewardship

Promote stewardship through environmental education, outreach, and programs.

Question 21: Do you think this goal is Very Important, Somewhat Important, Not So Important? (521 responded)



Question 22: Below are the current objectives for this goal. Please pick your top three priorities. (537 responded)



Question 23: Do you think there needs to be any changes to this goal and/or its objectives? (69 responded)

programs understand efforts to own education encouraging



Of the 69 respondents, 32 indicated that no changes are necessary to the goal and/or its objectives.

Comments were generally positive about environmental science and conservation programming in schools and for the community, although there was limited opposition to these objectives. Several comments focused on the need to pair clearly actionable initiatives with objectives that focus heavily on messaging. Several individual comments proposed specific actions, including wetlands regulation; trash cans, “do not litter” signs, and clean-ups; and invasive species reduction projects among others.

Question 24: What actions should the Town consider under this goal? (61 responded)

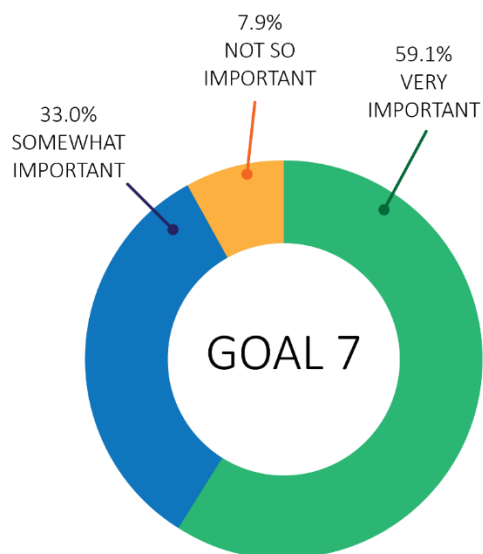
Common themes of proposed actions were:

- Focus on actions and engagement that would change Wellesley residents’ behavior. Recommendations include incentivizing environmental protection by private actors, community education, community stewardship events, and better enforcement.
- Support increased environmental programming in K-12. Many recommended that environmental programming include younger grades to foster stewardship from an early age.
- Planting more trees and plant species that provide benefits to local pollinators and protecting existing natural resources. Changing Town mowing policies to protect pond buffers and collaboration with local institutions was also mentioned.
- Need for regional or institutional partnerships and increasing technical capacity to support the goal and/or its objectives.

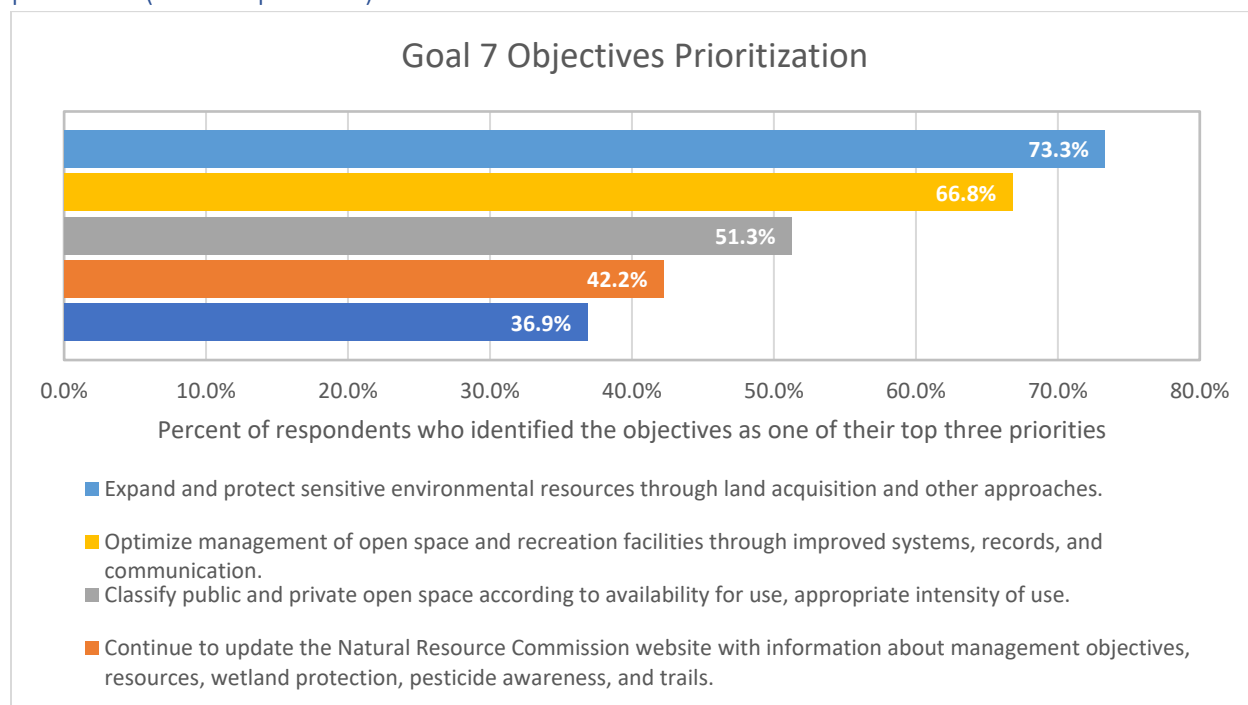
Goal 7: Create resource management strategies

Create resource management strategies to protect and increase open space and environmental resources.

Question 25: Do you think this goal is Very Important, Somewhat Important, Not So Important? (509 responded)

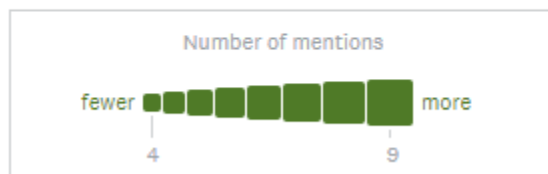


Question 26: Below are the current objectives for this goal. Please pick your top three priorities (521 responded)



Question 27: Do you think there needs to be any changes to this goal and/or its objectives? (71 responded)

increase Open town residents open space spaces



Of the 71 respondents, 31 indicated that no changes are necessary to the goal and/or its objectives.

Comments frequently addressed the phrasing and scope of the proposed goal and objectives. In some cases, respondents believed Goal 7 overlapped with other goals and objectives, and there were also several responses that wanted more clarity on what Goal 7 and its objectives hoped to accomplish or meant in practice. Comments unrelated to the phrasing and scope of Goal 7 and its objectives were varied, covering topics like Lake Waban and Wellesley College, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, light and noise abatement, and adding recreational facilities.

Question 28: What actions should the Town consider under this goal? (55 responded)

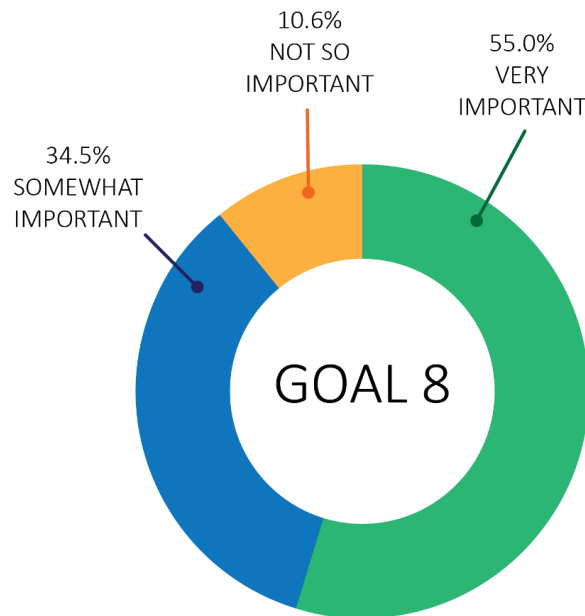
Common themes for proposed actions were:

- Land acquisition and/or preventing development from destroying natural habitat. Several respondents recommended the Town partner with local private land trusts to pursue land acquisition.
- Regulation and enforcement, including changes to existing zoning regulations to encourage more natural space.
- Proactive communication strategies and existing methods to engage community members
- Evaluate and address planning gaps and use existing studies, if any, to inform actions.
- Access restrictions at Lake Waban and Wellesley College's role.

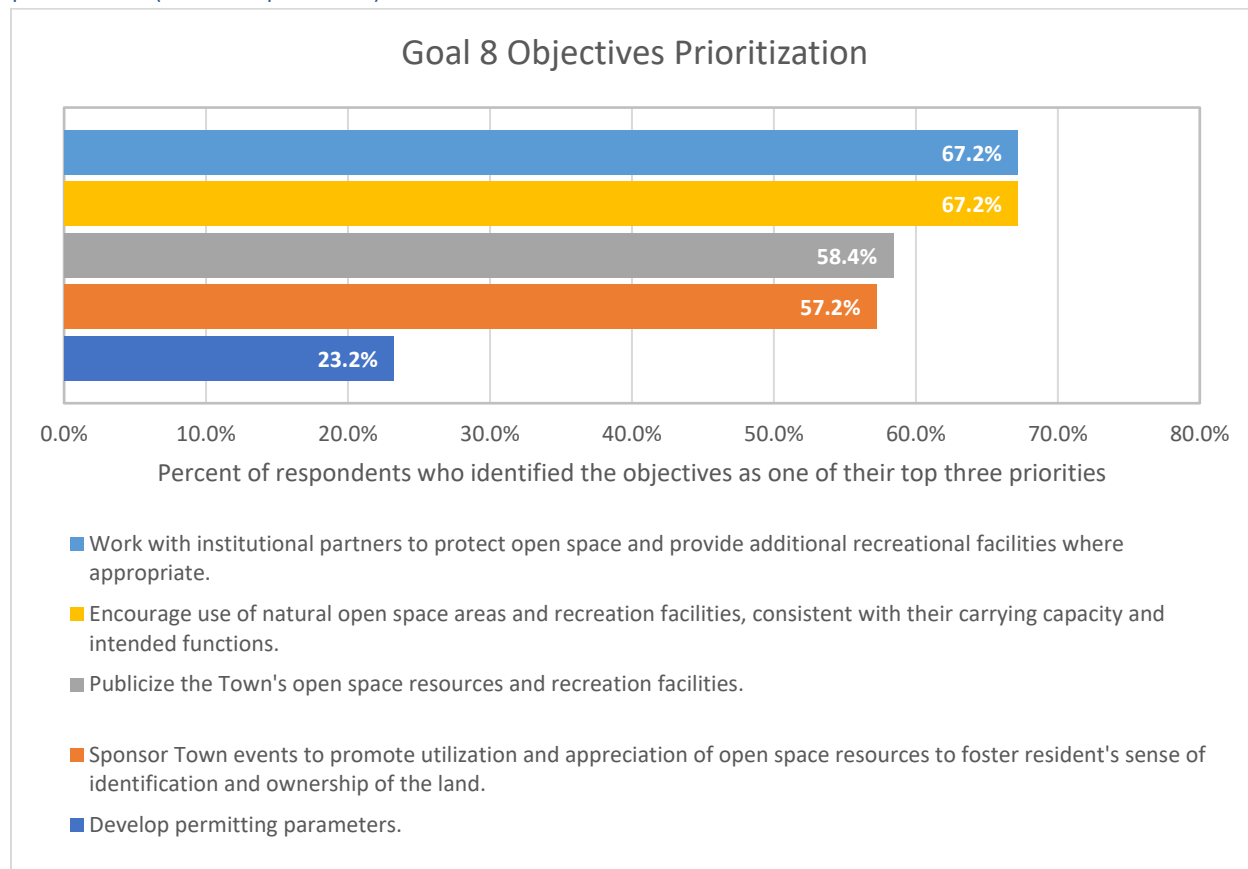
Goal 8: Promote the awareness and use of parks, recreation facilities, and open space resources

Promote the awareness and use of parks, recreation facilities, and open space resources for the use and enjoyment of the public.

Question 29: Do you think this goal is Very Important, Somewhat Important, Not So Important? (502 responded)



Question 30: Below are the current objectives for this goal. Please pick your top three priorities. (512 responded)



Question 31: Do you think there needs to be any changes to this goal and/or its objectives? (82 responded)

dogs love encouraging natural resources spaces recreational
 open space parks use Open areas recreational facilities
 people resources Promote



Of the 82 respondents, 32 indicated that no changes are necessary to the goal and/or its objectives.

Common topics addressed include requests to protect or enable access to all users to specific facilities (Lake Waban and Morses Pond). Several respondents also expressed a desire to better regulate activities within facilities (i.e., no unleashed dogs) or restrict access to Town facilities to Town residents only. Additional comments illustrated a desire to prioritize natural open space and passive recreation facilities instead of active recreation facilities.

Question 32: What actions should the Town consider under this goal? (59 responded)

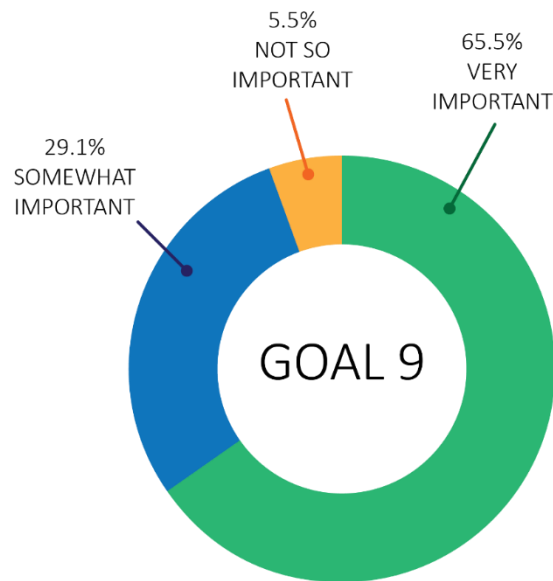
Common themes for proposed actions were:

- Increasing community engagement, encouraging use of active and passive recreation spaces through events and education, and increasing outreach to solicit diverse community input on OSRP topics.
- Adding recreation facilities, specifically a Town pool and dog park.
- Lights at recreation fields, with a split between wanting and not wanting lights installed.
- Not adding too many recreational facilities, especially at the expense of natural resources and land.

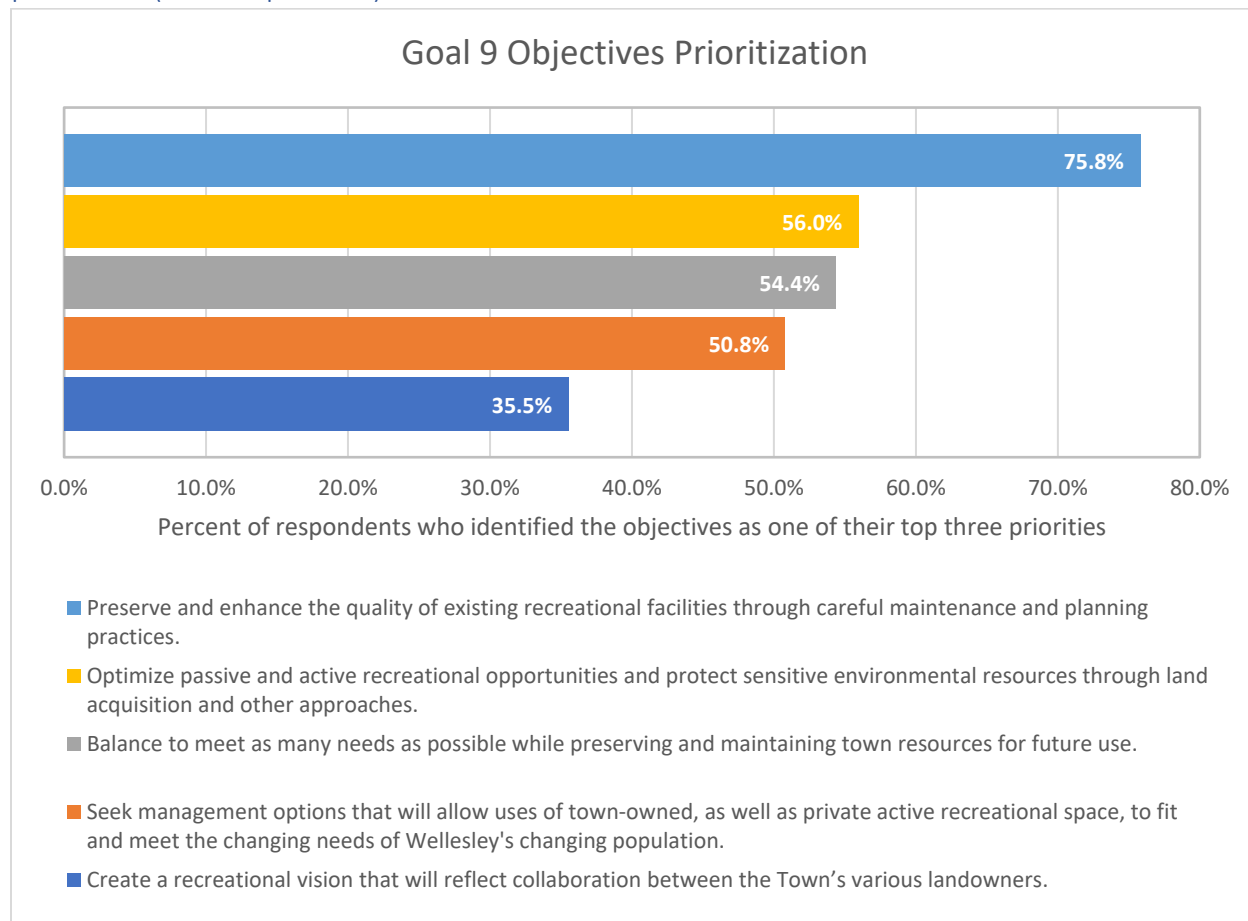
Goal 9: Ensure that open space and recreational programs continue

Ensure that open space and recreation programs continue to meet the needs of the Town.

Question 33: Do you think this goal is Very Important, Somewhat Important, Not So Important? (495 responded)



Question 34: Below are the current objectives for this goal. Please pick your top three priorities. (504 responded)



Question 35: Do you think there needs to be any changes to this goal and/or its objectives? (68 responded)

recreational vague night spaces fields needs town needs
 high school town use lights playing fields open space
 resources protect Define Private



Of the 68 respondents, 26 indicated that no changes are necessary to the goal and/or its objectives.

Common topics addressed include confusion about what “the needs of the Town” means in practice and advocating for lights at the high school field. Several responses illustrated the tension and potential trade-offs between adding passive recreation land versus active recreation land, while other responses called for additional active recreation facilities (including a Town pool). A few respondents questioned why the Natural Resource Commission was addressing recreational goals given the existence of a Recreation Department.

Question 36: What actions should the Town consider under this goal? (43 responded)

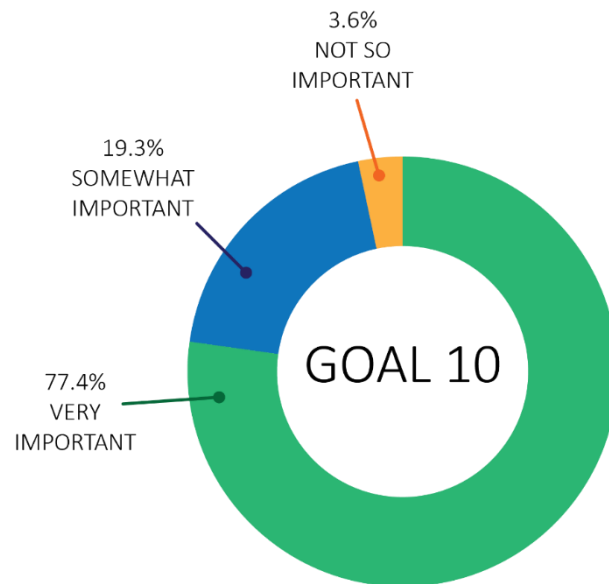
Common themes for proposed actions were:

- Understanding and/or defining “needs” more clearly. Proposed action included continued engagement with community members to solicit feedback and assessing current recreation facilities to identify areas for improvement.
- Expanding the Town’s current roster of recreational facilities, specifically playground spaces, bike and walking trails, pools, recreational fields, and bathrooms.
- Preserving natural open space, not converting natural lands into recreational facilities, and establishing limits to recreational space.
- Establishing a walking path around Lake Waban.
- Engaging with Wellesley College.
- Limiting lights versus installing lights.
- Focusing the Natural Resource Commission’s activities on non-recreation spaces

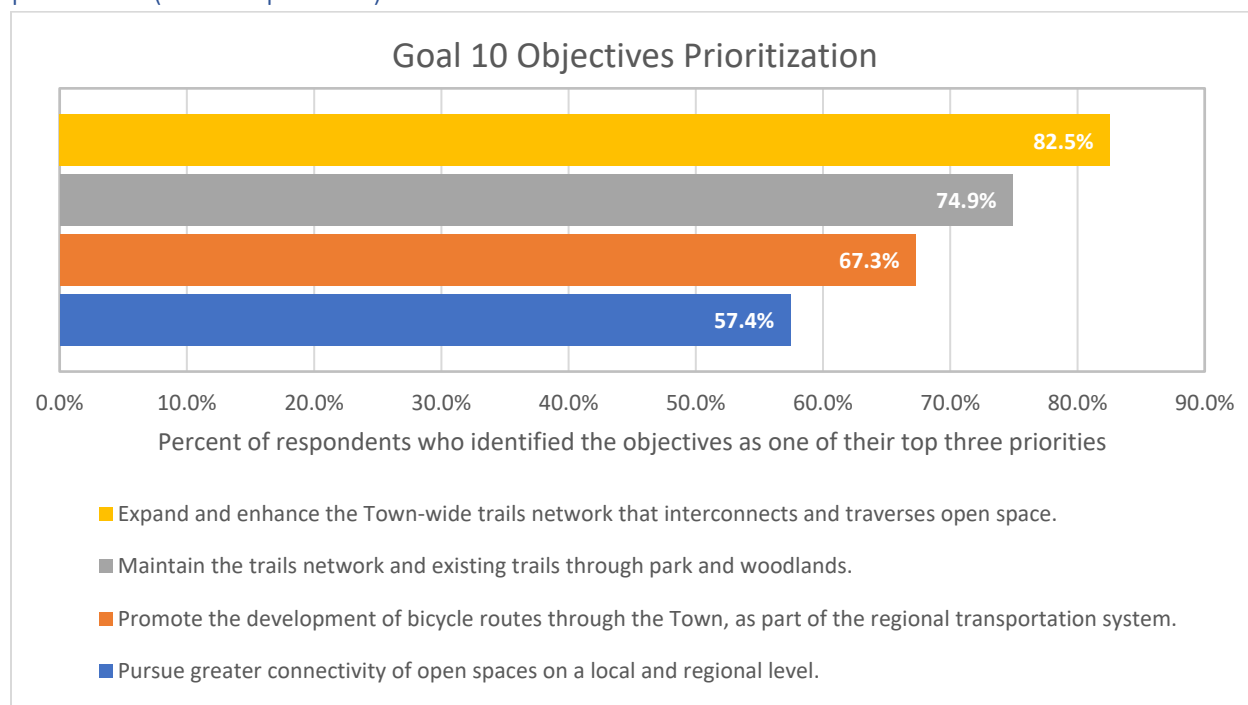
Goal 10: Provide opportunities for safe and enjoyable walking and bicycle access

Provide opportunities for safe and enjoyable walking and bicycle access throughout the Town.

Question 37: Do you think this goal is Very Important, Somewhat Important, Not So Important? (492 responded)

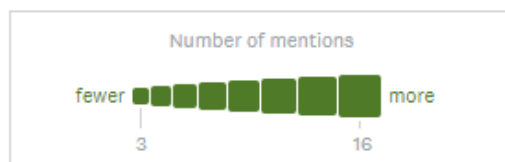


Question 38: Below are the current objectives for this goal. Please pick your top three priorities. (498 responded)



Question 39: Do you think there needs to be any changes to this goal and/or its objectives? (77 responded)

make existing roads Wellesley streets cars areas walking bikers paths
 pedestrians town bicycle bike traffic safe bike lanes trails
 streets needs Safety sidewalks encourage cyclists



Of the 77 respondents, 25 indicated that no changes are necessary to the goal and/or its objectives.

Common topics include the need to separate users of Wellesley's walking trails and bike paths (mountain bikers versus hikers and bikers versus pedestrians); the need to maintain existing trails; and the need to plan specifically for pedestrian and cyclist users during infrastructure and development planning. Other common topics include pedestrian and cyclist safety for all community members of all age groups and abilities.

A few respondents expressed negative reactions to the goal and/or its objectives, largely stating that Wellesley does not need additional bicycle lanes.

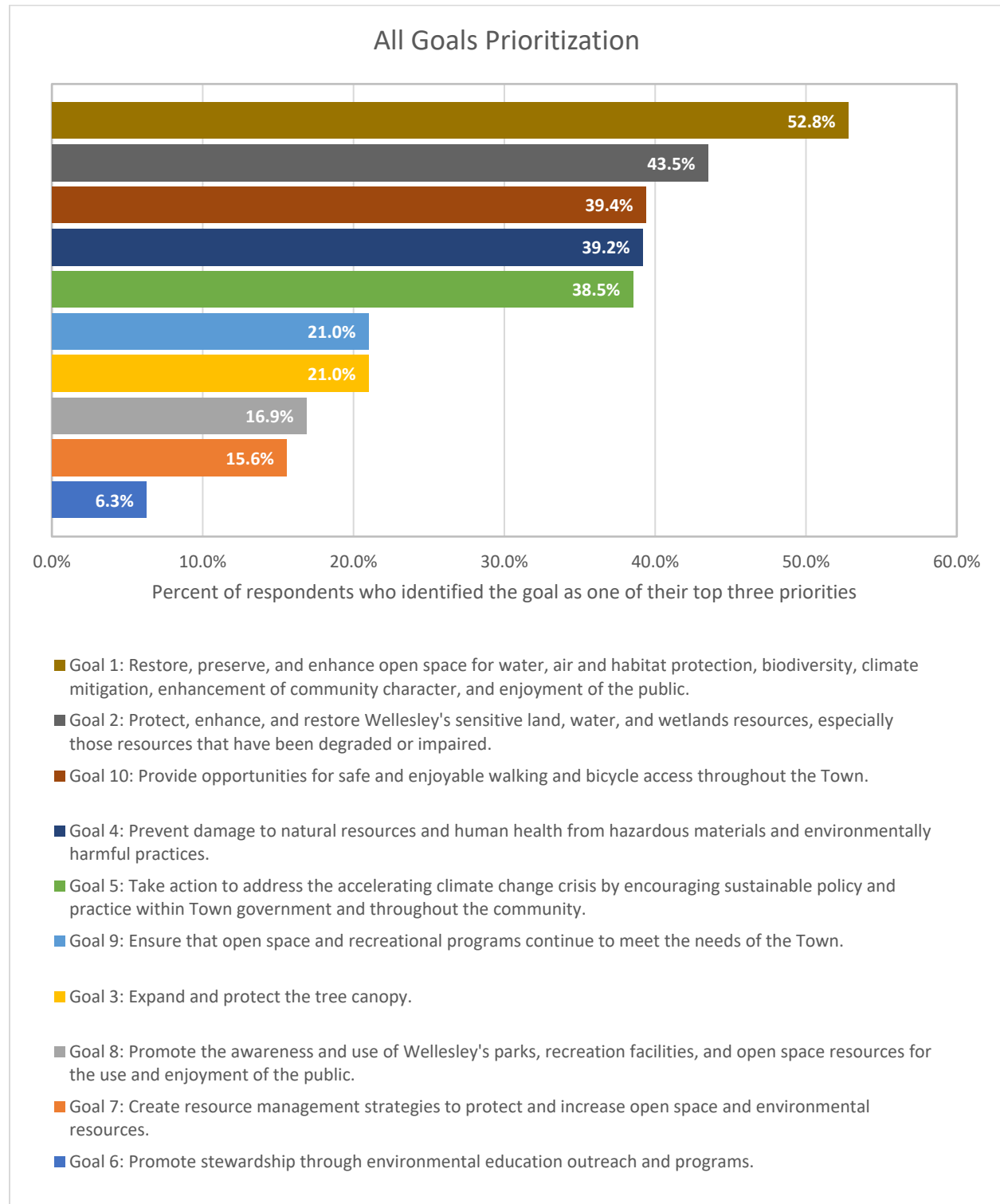
Question 40: What actions should the Town consider under this goal? (59 responded)

Common themes for proposed actions were:

- Cyclist and pedestrian safety, including:
 - Increasing dedicated cyclist and pedestrian pathways (especially bike lanes that are separated from vehicular traffic).
 - Adding and/or improving bike lanes and sidewalks on specific roads/paths (Weston Rd, Route 9, Brook Path, Wellesley Ave at Wellesley Country Club, Elm Bank Reservation to Wellesley Square, near Morses Pond Rd, Oakland Ave, Wellesley Ave near Fiske School, Washington St, and Central St).
 - Enforcing traffic rules for both vehicular traffic and cyclists on shared roads
- Expanding the Town's existing trails and bike routes system in town as well as connecting to regional trail and bike networks.

All Goals

Question 41: The ten goals are listed below. Please identify three goals that require immediate attention or are the most important to you. (462 responses)



Tell us about yourself!

Question 42: Do you live in Wellesley (481 responded)

Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	96.05%
No, but I visit many of its open space and recreational areas.	3.95%

Question 43: If you live in Wellesley, for how long? (466 responded)

Answer Choices	Responses
Less than 5 years.	11.16%
5 – 10 years	16.09%
10 – 20 years	30.90%
More than 20 years	41.85%

Question 44: How old are you? (465 responded)

The age of respondents skews older, with 62.3% of respondents between 45 and 74 years of age. Comparatively, only 33.7% of Wellesley residents are between 45 and 74 years of age. Residents aged 24 years and under make up 44.5% of Wellesley's population but are underrepresented amongst the respondents (13.7%).

Answer Choices	Survey Respondents	2019 ACS Population Estimate
Under 18	11.37%	25%
18-24	2.32%	19.5%
25-34	2.32%	5.2%
35-44	13.26%	9.2%
45-59	34.53%	33.7*
60-74	27.79%	
75+	8.42%	7.4%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2019 (Table SE: 101001 Age)

*ACS 5-Year Estimates records age in nine-year increments (i.e., 45 to 54 years, 55 to 64 years, and 65 to 74 years).

Question 45: Do you have children under the age of 18 in your home? (471 responded)

The percentage of respondents with and without children under the age of 18 in their home aligns closely with Wellesley's overall trends.

Answer Choices	Survey Respondents	2019 ACS Population Estimate
Yes	47.13%	43.8%
No	52.87%	56.2%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2019 (Table SE: A10009 Households by Presence of People Under 18 Years by Household Type)

Question 46: Which of the following best describes you? Check all that apply. (434 responded)

89.4% of survey respondents self-reported as White or Caucasian, compared to 80.3% of Wellesley residents. Several racial and ethnic groups are underrepresented amongst survey respondents, including Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, and Asian or Asian American residents.

Answer Choices	Survey Respondents	2019 ACS Population Estimate
White or Caucasian	89.40%	80.3%
Black or African American	1.15%	2.9%
Hispanic or Latino	2.07%	5.1%
Asian or Asian American	6.91%	12.4%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.46%	0.1%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.00%	0.1%
Another race	1.61%	0.9%
Multiracial or Biracial	3.23%	3.3%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2019 (Table SE: A03001 Race and SE: A04001 Hispanic or Latino by Race)

Question 47: What was your total household income in 2020? (374 responded)

Respondents skew slightly wealthier than Wellesley's actual household income distribution. Wellesley residents whose household income is \$49,999 and below are underrepresented amongst respondents. Only 3.5% of respondents indicated their household income is below \$49,999, compared to 12.4% of Wellesley residents.

Answer Choices	Survey Respondents	2019 ACS Population Estimate
Under \$15,000	1.07%	3.7%
Between \$15,000 and \$29,999	1.60%	5.0%
Between \$30,000 and \$49,999	0.80%	4.7%
Between \$50,000 and \$74,999	4.01%	7.3%
Between \$75,000 and \$99,999	6.95%	5.8%
Between \$100,000 and \$150,000	15.78%	13.0%
Over \$150,000	69.79%	60.6%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2019 (Table SE: A14001 Household Income (In 2019 Inflation Adjusted Dollars))

Question 48: How did you hear about this survey? (461 responded)

Most respondents heard about the survey either through an emailed newsletter or other source. The 144 respondents that indicated “Other” mentioned the following sources:

- The Swellesley Report or other online news media
- School, school announcement, or Parent-Teacher Organization
- Postcard or mailing
- Email
- Social media, including Facebook and NextDoor
- Other sources, including word of mouth and a committee member

Answer Choices	Responses
Town’s website/Community Visioning page	8.68%
Emailed newsletter	30.80%
Local paper	3.25%
Town’s social media	14.32%
Word of mouth	8.46%
Announced at a Town board/committee meeting	3.25%
Other (please specify)	31.24%